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ABSTRACT

This paper presents two views on the categorization of Japanese nouns, verbs, and adjectives into form classes: the traditional view and a view set forth in the writing of Suzuki Akira. The fundamental issue here is the criterion for categorization. Is it the meaning of words, or is it their grammatical behavior that determines the system of categories? The traditional view establishes a criterion that is grammatical--the presence or absence of inflection is crucial in categorization. Suzuki (Akira's) arguments for classification appeal to the overall regularity or simplicity of the language; his fundamental assumption is that the grammatical forms of Japanese reflect in a direct way its semantic aspects. Both approaches are illustrated with examples. (VM)

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Verbs and Adjectives in Literary Japanese According to Suzuki Akira

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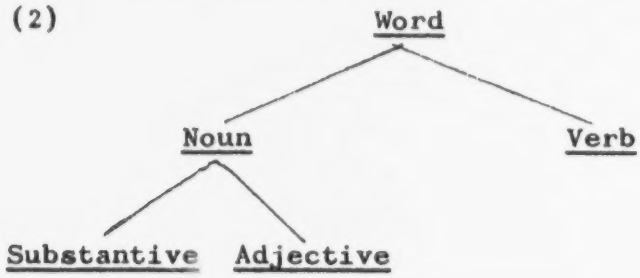
I This paper[1] is concerned with lexical categories, or in more traditional European grammatical terminology, the parts of speech. This notion has been central in European grammar from its first elaboration by the Stoics and Alexandrians[2] until the present time. The earliest categorization was a binary distinction between nouns and verbs; but traditional grammar generally recognizes at least a third category, adjectives:[3]

(1)

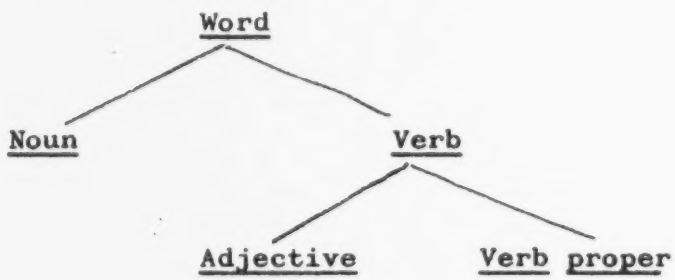
The place of adjectives in the system has proved a perennial focus of controversy. In fact many classical grammarians[2] considered those words which would now be thought of as adjectives to be a subcategory of nouns:[4]

(2)



There was as well a third alternative, which considered adjectives to be a subcategory of verbs:[5]

(3)



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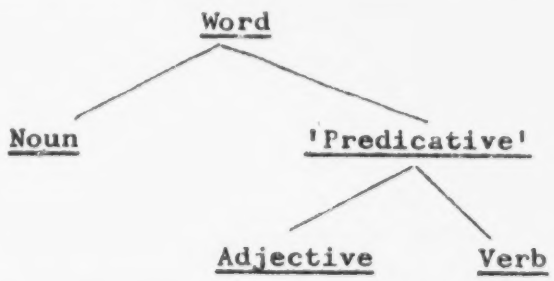
One of the oldest issues involved in this controversy has to do with the criteria for categorization. Is it the meanings of words, or is it their grammatical behavior, that is to determine the system of categories? One might hope, as many grammarians have, that the two kinds of criteria would converge on the same analysis. But such is seldom the result in practice: for 'typical' Indo-European languages like Latin, those who emphasize semantic considerations tend toward position (3); those who emphasize grammatical considerations tend toward position (2).[6]

It is interesting that the European grammatical tradition is not unique in having developed a system of lexical categories. Similar ideas have appeared in India and in the Far East, though perhaps not attracting quite as much attention as in Europe. More interesting still is the appearance of similar problems and controversies in largely independent grammatical traditions. A case in point, and the focus of this paper, is the treatment of the question of adjectives vis-a-vis verbs in Japanese traditional grammar.[7]

II The dominant opinion on the adjective question in Japanese traditional grammar is clearly that adjectives and verbs both belong to a 'predicative' category which is itself on a level with the category of nouns. In other words, the position is a variant of (3) above:[8]

(3')



The traditional criterion for this particular system of categories is grammatical: the presence versus absence of inflection (katsuyō). Nouns (taigen) are those words which lack the capability; 'predicatives' (yōgen) are those which possess that capability. The further subcategorization into adjectives (keijōgen) and verbs (sayōgen) is based on differences in the endings which are attached and in the number of forms which exist (i. e. on the 'conjugation').[9]

Inflection in Japanese is rather different in nature from typical Indo-European forms. In the traditional analysis, five forms were recognized for each inflected word. These are:[10]

Imperfect/Negative (Shōzengen)

Adverbial/Conjunctive (Ren'yōgen)

Predicative (Setsudangen)

Attributive/Substantival (Rentaigen)

Perfect (Izengen)

The grammatical and semantic functions of these forms are elaborately described in most grammars of Japanese, literary or colloquial. The predicative form is that which appears in sentence final position; the adverbial/conjunctive form is used in adverbial and (non-final) conjoined clauses; the attributive/substantival form is used relative clauses and in nominalizations; the imperfect/negative form is used in hypothetical clauses, and in future and negative sentences; the perfect form is used in conditional and concessive clauses. These are only the primary uses.

The regular verb paradigms are:[11]

Class I:	Class IIa:
tatsu 'stand'	oku 'get up'
tata-	oki
tachi	oki
tatsu	oku
tatsu	okuru
tate	okure

Class IIb:	Class III:
u 'be able'	kiru 'wear'
e	ki
e	ki

u	kiru
uru	kiru
ure	kire

Notice that in none of the four regular classes of verbs are all five forms phonologically distinguished. The imperfect/negative form, in the one class where it is phonologically unique, appears with a hyphen because it is bound, and must always be followed by some additional suffix.

There are in addition a few irregular verbs, of which only one class is of concern here:

Class IV:

ari 'exist'	wori 'exist' (= wi+ari)
ara-	wora-
ari	wori
ari	wori
aru	woru
are	wore

nari 'copula' (= ni+ari)	-tari 'copula' (= to+ari)
nara-	-tara-
ni	-to
nari	-tari
naru	-taru
nare	-tare

The only difference between this irregular class and Class I is the predicative form, which ends in i like the adverbial/conjunctive rather than in u like the attributive/substantival. It is irregular principally because it consists of the single verb ari, together with its compounds. Ari plays a role also in the formation of periphrastic verbal tenses:[12]

'Stative present'

tateri (= tachi+ari) 'is standing'

okitari (= okite+ari) 'is up'

'Stative negative'

tatazari (= tatazu+ari) 'is not standing'

'Stative future'

tatameri (= tatamu+ari) 'will be standing'

'Stative past'

tachikeri (= tachiki+ari) 'was standing'

'Stative perfect'

tachitari (= tachite+ari) 'has stood'

All of these forms are capable of inflecting in the same general way as the verb ari (though some forms are not to be found for other reasons). With some of the compounds, particularly nari and -tari, the adverbial/conjunctive form is normally without ari; however the compound may occasionally be used in that function also.

The adjective paradigms are:[13]

Class Va:		Class Vb:	
yoshi 'good'		ashi 'bad'	
	yoku (yokara-)		ashiku (ashikara-)
	yoku		ashiku
	yoshi		ashi
	yoki		ashiki
	(yokere)		(ashikere)

The only difference in the two adjective classes is in the predicative form; adjectives whose stem ends in shi lose the ending -shi. Notice in addition the peculiarities in the imperfect/negative and perfect forms. They seem to be compounds of ari similar to the corres-

ponding forms of the copula nari above. There is in fact an alternate adjectival paradigm in -ari:[14]

yokara-	ashikara-
yoku	ashiku
yokari	ashikari
yokaru	ashikaru
yokare	ashikare

The forms yokari and yokaru replace yoshi and yoki in certain literary styles regularly, in others occasionally. Ashikari may also occasionally be used for ashiku, just as nari is for ni. Forms from this paradigm seem to have replaced (or possibly supplied) the adjectival imperfect/negative form in some uses, and the perfect form entirely (though the reason for the vowel change is unclear).

Finally, there are some adjectives with a bound copula:[15]

haruka nari 'distant'

haruka nara-

haruka ni

haruka nari

haruka naru

haruka nare

These have the same peculiarities as other compounds of ari.

Japanese nouns and non-derived adverbs do not undergo inflection of the sort just described. Thus in Japanese one would perhaps expect both semantic and grammatical criteria for lexical categorization to converge on an alysis of type (3) -- and in fact that is the case. There are, however, dissenters within the Japanese grammatical tradition. It should be clear from the above paradigms that while Japanese verbs and adjective do indeed share the important property of inflectability, they nevertheless also differ in some

ways. The present paper will investigate the ideas of one such dissenter.

III The only book in pre-modern Japanese grammar devoted exclusively to the elaboration of a system of lexical categories is Suzuki Akira's Gengyo Shishuron.[16] In this short treatise, Akira takes two dissenting positions, the first being that there are in Japanese three major lexical categories, nouns, adjectives and verbs (in his terms, respectively tai no kotoba, arikata no kotoba, shiwaza no kotoba), which he correlates semantically with objects, states and actions.[17] The second is that ari and its compounds belong in the adjective class rather than among the verbs, which is also presented first in semantic terms: the words in question refer to states.[18]

But Akira does not content himself with semantic arguments alone; he lists a number of grammatical arguments in support of his stand, and against the prevailing grammatically based view. It is these latter which are most worthy of scrutiny. Arguments in favor of the categorization of ari and its compounds with adjectives will be considered first, followed by those in favor of the independence of the categories of adjectives and verbs.

First of all, Akira observes that, in the predicative form, those words which he wishes to call adjectives end in i; those which he wishes to call verbs end in u. He draws the conclusion that it is the final vocalism in the predicative form of inflected words which expresses the semantic value of state versus action. Secondly he observes that the opposite of ari is nashi 'not exist', a clear adjective. The grammar of Japanese will be the more regular if suppletive positive/negative pairs belong to the same lexical categories. Thirdly, he notes the alternative adjectival forms in ari. Stylistic variants such as yoshi and yokari also should belong to the same lexical category if regularity is to be valued. Fourthly, similar cases can be adduced from other kinds of stylistic phenomena. Akira points out the equivalence of words in X-X-zentari in kanbun, and in Y-Y-shi in native styles. The former is of course one of the compounds of ari; the latter is unambiguously adjectival. Again, Japanese grammar will be more regular if the two can be included in the same pan-stylistic lexical category.

The force of these arguments is clearly in an appeal to the overall regularity or simplicity of the language. Akira's fundamental assumption is that the grammatical forms of the Japanese language reflect in a direct way its semantic aspects. He is claiming that, given his system of categories, which can be motivated both semantically and grammatically, the relationship between meaning and grammatical form becomes clearer. Other criteria, such as the overall similarity of the paradigm, are simply irrelevant.

On the matter of the independence of adjectives and verbs as categories, Akira points out the occurrence of adjectives, but not verbs, before the particle no, a position characteristic of nouns:[19]

yoshi no kuruma 'good wagon'

yoki kuruma 'good wagon'

Tarō no kuruma 'Tarō's wagon'

*fuku no kaze

fuku kaze 'blowing wind'

Ari may also occur in this position, as in:

ari no mama 'as is'

Secondly, he observes the existence of deverbal nouns which end in i:

miyuki '(hon) going' from yuku 'go'

tsukai 'messenger' from tsukau 'employ'

omoi 'thought' from omou 'think'

Thirdly, he notes that generally with derivatives, all three categories equally may serve as a base to obtain other categories:

Verb as base:

kou 'desire' koishi 'dear, beloved'

Adjective as base:

kanashi 'sad' kanashibu 'grieve'

Noun as base:

kuro	'blackness'	kuroshi	'black'
		kuromu	'blacken'
shūnen	'tenacity'	shūneshi	'tenacious'
sōzoku	'inheritance'	sōzoku	'inherit'

The last two examples are particularly interesting as rare cases of Sino-Japanese words which have taken on the inflectional properties of native Japanese words. The normal way to use them predicatively would be in compounds like shūnen ganashi or sōzoku su, also cited by Akira.

The force of these arguments is that adjectives, in addition to sharing grammatical properties with verbs, also share some with nouns. They are in a sense an intermediate category between the two polar categories, nouns and verbs, and not necessarily closer to one than to the other. This supports their independence, and of course the idiom with ari is a nice extra in favor of its being an adjective.

IV The present paper has been directed toward grammatical theory, in the sense of the kinds of statements and analyses that have been put forth to account for certain linguistic facts, and the motivations accompanying them. It will not attempt to pass judgment as to the ultimate correctness of any of the views mentioned. This is not because it would not be possible to resolve the controversies or desirable to try, but reflects a practical limitation on the scope of the paper. No doubt a convincing resolution would be difficult, requiring the formulation of a very substantial segment of Japanese grammar, and quite likely the consideration of other languages as well. But that is another paper.

What should perhaps be clear is the relevance of Akira's observations to the problem. If they do not ultimately lead to the conclusions he draws, they still must be accounted for in the context of any better analysis. Akira's work seems to represent a high point of Japanese traditional grammar in terms of the quality of argument offered in support of grammatical proposals. However, some of his positions are rather less obviously relatable to contemporary ideas. One such deserves notice in the present context, as a more or less

fitting conclusion to this investigation of verbs and adjectives.

Akira observes that his system of overt expression for certain basic semantic relations (the notion 'object' by absence of inflection; 'state' by inflection having the predicative form in i; 'action' by inflection having the predicative form in u) does not exist in literary Chinese, though the same relations must be conveyed nonetheless. He concludes that this is the reason why Chinese literature is difficult to interpret and requires extensive commentary; the formal grammatical structure simply fails to adequately express those basic relations, resulting in rampant and deleterious ambiguity. He takes this as convincing proof of the superiority of the Japanese language. In Akira's view, then, a language is highly valued to the degree to which its grammar is both regular and semantically expressive. This is reminiscent of a view once held vis-a-vis Chinese by his better known contemporary Wilhelm von Humboldt. Von Humboldt, however, later conceded that perhaps Chinese represented an alternative equally valid linguistic type--obviously he never seriously tried to study the Chinese classics.[20]

Notes and References

1. This paper was originally prepared for presentation to the 1971 annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies, as part of a panel on Japanese linguistics, and under the general rubric 'Kokugaku grammatical tradition and generative transformational grammar'.

2. Cf. the extant work of grammarians like Dionysios Thrax, M. Terentius Varro and Apollonios Dyskolos; for commentary, cf. R. H. Robins, A Short History of Linguistics, 1967.

3. The schemata (1), (2) and (3) are over simplified in several respects. In particular, the category of adverbs and its place in the system is ignored.

4. The terminology here is traditional, and not to be taken too seriously. For example, one could reserve the term noun for substantives, and relabel the larger category. Cf. notes 5 and 9.

5. This system seems to be that intended in the earliest European work on the parts of speech by the philosophers Plato and Aristotle. It is also found in such later works as James Harris' Hermes, 1751. As before, the terminology is somewhat arbitrary.

6. These are tendencies only, and there are numerous exceptions. Recently the question of adjectives and their role in a lexical category system has received some attention in the context of generative transformational grammar. Paul Postal and George Lakoff assembled a long list of arguments intending to show that for English, (3) is the correct analysis. Cf. Lakoff, Irregularity in Syntax, 1970, Appendix I. Some counterarguments may be found in Noam Chomsky, 'Remarks on nominalization', in Jacobs and Rosenbaum, eds., Readings in English Transformational Grammar, 1970, pp. 198-9. Cf. also Emmon Bach, 'Nouns and noun phrases', in Bach and Harms, eds., Universals in Linguistic Theory, 1968.

7. For a general study of Japanese traditional grammar, cf. my unpublished MIT dissertation Kokugaku Grammatical Theory, 1968. A useful presentation of the diverse views on the parts of speech in Japanese traditional grammar is Fomin, 'Iz istorii japonskogo jazykoznanija: učenije o častjax reči u tokugavskix filologov', in Paškovskij, ed., Japonskij Lingvističeskij Sbornik, 1959. There is of course a vast

Japanese literature on the subject, a partial bibliography of which may be found in my dissertation.

8. This is the position reflected in the earliest account of Japanese parts of speech, the introduction to Fujitani Seisho's Ayui shō, 1778, and in the various treatises of Gimon. It is often taken by contemporary advocates of (3) for English to be the obviously right analysis of Japanese.

9. The terminology is by and large that used by Gimon in his textbook Katsugo shinan, 1843, though it also appears in his earlier works, e. g. Yamaguchi no shiori, 1818. His terms are chosen because they formed the basis of the usual modern school grammar. Seisho's terminology was completely different, and had little effect on subsequent work. As suggested in note 4, the labels are here less important than the brackets.

10. The Japanese terms are again those of Gimon; the English ones are those of George Sansom in his An Historical Grammar of Japanese, 1928. Other translations are in use, but these are as good as any.

11. This is by and large the classification system elaborated in Motoori Haruniwa's Kotoba no yachimata, 1803, selected as before because it became the foundation of modern school grammar. Ignored in the paradigms is the imperative (meireigen).

12. These are not normally grouped together in Japanese traditional grammar, much less considered 'tenses'. The English terms are my own, and are not to be taken as necessarily having any descriptive semantic significance.

13. These paradigms are mentioned by Haruniwa, though he includes no detailed treatment.

14. Like the -ari tenses, these forms are not usually accorded any special status in early Japanese traditional grammar.

15. Words like this correspond to the 'traditional' category keiyōdōshi. Most early grammarians don't mention them as a separate entity. Seisho does in the introduction to the Ayui shō; the examples are his.

16. The book was first published in 1824, though there is some reason to think that it was written rather earlier, perhaps at the same time as Akira's other two

short grammatical works, Gago onjō kō, 1801, and [illegible] danzoku fu, 1803. A full English translation appears in my dissertation, and translations of some passages relevant to this paper in the notes to Ishigaki's paper cited below in note 18.

17. There have been a number of later Japanese grammarians who treated adjectives as an independent category--but usually for no more reason than that European traditional grammar so treated them.

18. The only subsequent Japanese grammarian that I know of who has followed Akira in this is Ishigaki Kenji, in a paper titled 'Sayōsei yōgen hanpatsu no mōsoku', 1942, which first appeared in Kokugo to kokubungaku, and is reprinted in Ishigaki's Joshi no rekishiteki kenkyū, 1955 and in Yamagiwa, ed., Readings in Japanese Grammar and Linguistics, 1965. The latter edition contains notes and an English glossary. Though Ishigaki's claims are interesting, they extend Akira's position somewhat, and are not really relevant here.

19. In the following, the underlined examples are those actually cited by Akira.

20. Cf. the discussion of Chinese in Humboldt's Lettre à M. Abel-Rémusat sur la nature des formes grammaticales en général, et sur le génie de la langue chinoise en particulier, 1827, and Über die Verschiedenheit des menschlichen Sprachbaues und ihren Einfluss auf die geistige Entwicklung des Menschengeschlechts, 1936.

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